

Remarks

Reconsideration of this Application is respectfully requested.

Upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-27 and 37 are pending in the application, with 1 and 37 being the independent claims. Claims 28-36 are sought to be cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer as being directed to a non-elected invention. These changes are believed to introduce no new matter, and their entry is respectfully requested. The claim amendments were to broaden the scope of the effected dependent claims.

Based on the above amendment and the following remarks, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider all outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn.

Objection to the Specification

The Examiner objected to the abstract. Applicants respectively request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this objection based on the amendments above.

Objection to the Informal Drawings

Submitter herewith are formal drawings. Applications respectively request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this objection based on the submission of formal drawings.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) and 103(a)

Claims 1-27 and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Published App. No. 2001/0035942 to Hara et al. ("Hara").

Claim 1 recites at least a wafer exchange chamber coupled to a lithography patterning chamber and at least one alignment load-lock separated from the wafer exchange chamber by a gate valve, the at least one alignment load-lock including an alignment stage that aligns a wafer.

Claim 37 recites at least a wafer exchange chamber adjacent to a lithography patterning chamber, at least one alignment chucking station adjacent to the wafer exchange chamber, and a plurality of chucks, wherein wafers are moved to and from the lithography patterning chamber while being affixed to respective ones of the plurality of chucks.

First, the Examiner asserts Hara teaches a lithography patterning chamber 20, however element 20 is a exposure stage. Implicitly, element 26 in Hara could be a lithography patterning chamber. This is the only chamber taught in Hara. Second, there is no wafer exchange chamber. Examiner asserts element 35 is a wafer exchange chamber, however element 35 is a reticle stage. Implicitly, wafers are exchanged using wafer transfer robot 40, but it is not located within a chamber. No where in Hara is there a wafer exchange chamber taught or suggested. Third, there is no alignment load lock including an alignment stage. Examiner asserts 31 and 36 are wafer alignment load locks. However, element 31 is merely a load lock for reticles and element 36 is merely a load lock for wafers. No where in Hara is there taught or suggested an alignment operation being performed within load lock 36. Also, no where in Hara is there taught or suggested that load lock 36 includes an alignment stage.

Therefore, Hara neither anticipates nor renders obvious at least these features of claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection. Also, at least based on their dependency from claim 1, claims 2-27 should also be found allowable over the applied reference.

In regards to claim 37, the claim is allowable for at least the same reasons claim 1 is allowable, as discussed above. Also, there is no plurality of chucks and/or wafers transported on chucks to the alleged lithography patterning chamber 26. Hara teaches of using only one chuck 39 to hold wafers. No other chucks are associated with load lock 36 or the wafers. Element 39 holds wafers before they are taken off element 39 and transported, separately and not with element 39, to a stage surface plate 21 using robot 40.

Therefore, Hara neither anticipates nor renders obvious at least these features of claim 37. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejection.

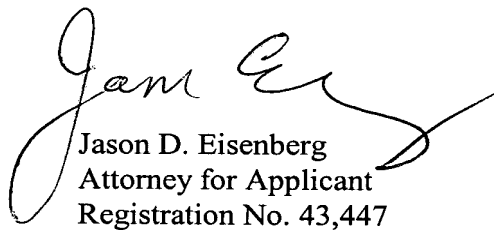
Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of objection and rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding objections and rejections and that they be withdrawn. Applicants believe that a full and complete reply has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

Prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment and Reply is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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